



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

——
Love
Which Passeth
Knowledge.
——

100. s.

215.





IN MEMORIAM.

LOVE WHICH PASSETH KNOWLEDGE.

A SERMON

DELIVERED IN THE

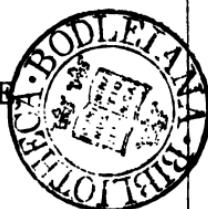
FREE WEST CHURCH, HELENSBURGH.

WITH

A NOTICE REGARDING THE LATE RICHARD KIDSTON, ESQ.,
GLASGOW.

BY

REV. A. N. SOMERVILLE,
GLASGOW.



GLASGOW: DAVID BRYCE & CO.
EDINBURGH: W. P. KENNEDY.

1865.

100. S. 215.

GLASGOW:
PRINTED BY BELL AND BAIN,
MITCHELL STREET.

IN MEMORIAM.

LOVE WHICH PASSETH KNOWLEDGE.

A SERMON

DELIVERED IN THE

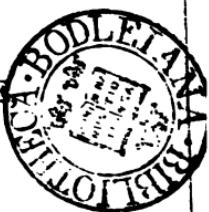
FREE WEST CHURCH, HELENSBURGH.

WITH

**A NOTICE REGARDING THE LATE RICHARD KIDSTON, ESQ.,
GLASGOW.**

BY

**REV. A. N. SOMERVILLE
GLASGOW.**



**GLASGOW: DAVID BRYCE & CO.
EDINBURGH: W. P. KENNEDY.**

1865.

100. S. 215.

1

of colossal musical glasses—seemed to sweep in circles among the heights. They rang out again, and again, and again, and again, lingering still amid precipice and peak; then gradually softening, they became fainter and fainter, and so died away.

The incident may be recalled in connection with those epistles which Paul indited from Rome, of which that to the Ephesians forms one. When, under the breathing of the Holy Spirit, these were composed, the apostle was a captive and in prison, chained to a soldier that kept him, or otherwise in bonds. The words, when dictated or written by him, made little impression at the spot. The letters of Paul the prisoner, Jew, and Christian, were matters of no interest in Rome. The man himself was beneath the regard of philosopher, orator, poet, or senator, in the imperial city. But if Paul's words at the time were of small account in the place where they were uttered, we have only to wait for a short season to learn their marvellous effect elsewhere. The voice from the prison stirred the hearts of a multitude in Ephesus, Colosse, and Philippi: thereafter it found its echoes in all

the cities of early Christianity: the reverberation has rolled onward during all succeeding centuries, wherever the epistles have made their way; and now the results are more wonderful than ever, as the circulation of the Scriptures advances throughout the globe.

The harmonies awakened by the Alpine horn among the Swiss mountains were reverberations of sound; but the echoes evoked by the voice from the Roman prison are of another character: they form the harmonies of faith, hope, and love; of gratitude, self-denial, and fidelity to Jesus; of elevated affection, heroic action, and holy life on the part of a multitude that no man can number “of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues.”

Turning now to the subject for to-day, let us consider—

I. THE LOVE OF CHRIST, AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF IT.

II. SOME OF THE ASPECTS OF THIS LOVE.

III. THE RESULT OF EXPERIMENTAL ACQUAINTANCE WITH CHRIST'S LOVE.

I.

CHRIST'S LOVE, AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF IT.

Regarding the Knowledge of Christ's love, I make a preliminary remark or two from the context. It is a blessing which God alone can impart: the apostle prays the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ to bestow it. This idea I wish to be borne in mind throughout our discourse. Again, the persons for whom the apostle besought the blessing were already Christians: they were the "saints at Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus." Further, the blessing requested is of unspeakable value: Paul pleads with God to give it "according to the riches of His glory." And yet again, it forms one of a series of blessings—a link in a splendid chain—and holds an advanced place in the series. "For this cause," he says, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may *dwell in your hearts* by faith; that ye, being

rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

It is the characteristic of Christ's love that it passeth knowledge. Let us notice,

First, THE DIVINITY OF THIS LOVE.—The apostle's language shows the love to be Divine. It is a love which passeth knowledge; a love, the breadth of which cannot be known, nor the length, nor the depth, nor the height of it. Science has taught us to calculate distances and to measure spaces of astonishing magnitude; but science will never enable us to ascertain the dimensions of the love of Christ. All creature love may be sounded and spanned; but the love of Christ is a region whose limits recede from us, ever as we penetrate its domain. "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" And have we not here love that, like God, is unsearchable? Of what is it declared, "It is as high

as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? the measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea"? Is it not the mystery of the nature, character, and ways of God? And what shall we say of a love which in its breadth, and length, and depth, and height passes knowledge, but that it forms part of the same mystery, and that the love of Christ, therefore, is Divine.

Yes, the love which shines in the Saviour's history, from the manger at Bethlehem to the cross at Calvary, and breathes in all His words and works on earth, is Divine love; the love of Christ which is sealed to all believers in the promises of the New Testament, is Divine love; the love which is reflected from the sacramental elements in baptism and the Lord's supper, is Divine love; even the love of Him "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God;" who "in the beginning was with God, and was God;" and whose coming again is announced to be that "blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

Second, THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH ENLARGE OUR ACQUAINTANCE WITH THIS LOVE.— Every Divine attribute passes knowledge; but doubtless, in speaking of Christ's love, the apostle refers to the exhibition of it which is afforded in the work of redemption. We judge of love by the dignity of the person loving, the disparity between him and the object beloved, the purity of the love which is exercised, the sacrifices the love has made, the tenacity with which it cleaves to its object, and the results it achieves. What, then, are the circumstances that illustrate love in the present instance? The glory of the person of the eternal Son; the distance natural between the Creator and the creature; the distance moral between the Holy One and the sinner—both distances infinite; purity in the love exercised, that would not admit of taint for millions of worlds; sacrifice which implied not merely passage from the riches of heaven to the poverty of earth, and the assumption of the nature of man, on the part of Him who loved, but the endurance of the two-fold burden of human guilt and of Divine wrath.

For more than thirty years the immaculate

Lamb groaned under a load of imputed iniquity: "He was made sin for us." Nor was this all. He bore the punishment which sin deserves: "He was made a curse for us," He was bruised between the millstones of God's wrath and man's sin: love led Him to lay down His life as an offering for the sins of the guilty. As to tenacity, centuries of provocation have not weakened the love of Christ, nor ever shall; while, as to its results, this love secures the rescue of a countless multitude from sin, Satan, death, and hell; their restoration to the favour and image of God; and their admission to eternal glory.

Would you, then, acquire a knowledge of Christ's love? Be acquainted with the circumstances that set it forth. He who, under the Spirit's illumination, apprehends most fully the glory of Christ, his own unworthiness, the evil of sin, and the wrath which it merits; he who has the most exalted idea of God's law, the most penetrating insight into the atonement of Jesus and His priceless righteousness; he who has the richest personal experience of the blessings Christ has purchased, and has had the love of Christ shed

most abundantly on his heart,—is the man who will most largely comprehend the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. Christian experience is what enlarges our knowledge of the love of Christ. It is such an experimental acquaintance with it which I understand to be the knowledge that Paul prays God to bestow by His Spirit, on the converted Ephesians. Those links in the chain that precede our text allude to stages in Christian experience. The further the stage to which we advance, the richer will be our knowledge of Christ's love.

Let us picture to our mind a lofty mountain, on whose summit a sublime display is to take place. At the base of this mountain lies a valley, from whose opposite side another mountain of lesser altitude rises; in short, such a scene as at Shechem or Sychar presented itself to the eyes of Israel in the days of Joshua, when the verdant Gerizim towered on the one side, the rocky Ebal, inferior in elevation, reared itself on the other, and the well-watered valley lay between. Let me suppose a multitude of persons to be invited to witness the display on the higher mountain, and to be

thronging the intervening valley. It will be understood that all who crowd the narrow plain will obtain a tolerable view of what is to take place above. Now, let us imagine that, instead of occupying the valley, a portion of the spectators ascend the lesser hill, and stand on it, at different altitudes; then, in proportion to the height of their position will be the distinctness with which the object displayed on the mountain opposite will be seen. The man who reaches the highest elevation will obtain the best view.

So is it with the subject we are treating. Christ's love is the object exhibited; the work of redemption is the towering height on the summit of which Christ's love is displayed; the platform of the Christian life, on which men find themselves at conversion, corresponds with the valley below; the hill on the opposite side of the valley is that of Christian experience. Now, though all Christians, from the level of conversion, can truly see the love of Christ, yet the higher any one mounts the hill of Spiritual Experience, the more favourable will be his position for comprehending that *love which passeth knowledge*. The apostle,

in our passage, prays that the believing Ephesians may rise from the level of the valley to the higher altitudes of the hill of Experience, so as to admit of their witnessing Christ's love in its transcendent glory.

Application 1.—This subject is fitted to convince some persons of their ignorance of the things of God. The individuals I refer to, sit listless and unmoved under all that can be told them about the love of Christ; they complain of weariness in the theme; the topic has no freshness for them; its novelty is gone. Why is this? Does any one tire of the music of the waves of the ever-sounding sea? Christ's love palls on your ear because the preciousness of Christ is as yet to you unknown; the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ has never shone in your heart, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.” Is it not to be feared that those among us who find no source of interest in the love of Christ are still in ignorance of the claims of God on them, and of His authority and holiness; that they are unconscious of their depravity and

misery; and have never felt the necessity for the bleeding Lamb? Do not blame the subject; the fault is with yourselves. Your dullness and insensibility to the charms of Christ's love, are due to blindness of heart. If you truly knew this love at all, you would understand that it possesses interest for man never to be exhausted. May He whose office it is to glorify Christ reveal to you His love! It is a love which passeth knowledge.

Application 2.—But if this subject is one that might arouse the sinner, it is suited also to allure him to repentance. No doubt it is to saints that Paul here directly speaks; but the unsearchableness of this love is a theme fitted to awaken hope, and to stimulate inquiry among the most careless. We cannot indeed say that it is the determinate purpose of God, in His love, to save all men; for in that case none should be lost. Nevertheless, the love of Christ is in its nature intense, in its exercise sovereign, and in its power to deliver resistless. It issues forth to quicken the soul, even when it is dead in sins; and it makes conquest of those who would seem most unlikely to become sharers in its blessings.

But perhaps you say that you doubt not the greatness of Christ's love, but only your being the object of it: "He does not save all the world. If I be not among those on whom He has set His love, what will that love avail for me?" I beseech you, turn not away from the love of Christ at the suggestion of a captious and unbelieving heart. The problems you wish settled will never be solved to you while you keep aloof from Christ. Let it be enough for you, meanwhile, to know that there is no case among men, beyond the compass of Christ's love to relieve, and that the Gospel, throwing wide its arms, invites you as a sinner to repair to Jesus for personal salvation. The love of Christ is like the paradise of God—a garden enclosed, where everything beautiful and fragrant is to be found, through which the river of life pours its waters, and where grows the tree of life with its twelve manner of fruits, and its healing leaves. Of this garden the invitations of the Gospel are the pearly gates; these gates are thrown back, and you are welcome to enter by them. You will find no flaming sword there to warn you off; the blood of Jesus Christ, God's

Son, cleanses each comer from all sin. Pass in, then, by faith in Jesus crucified, at the gate of invitation, and the paradise shall become your own.

This more I will add, though your iniquity have a width stretching beyond all the commandments of God, this love has breadth enough to cover it. Though your wanderings have led you to an unknown distance from God, and you have lost all desire to return, this love has length, such, that it can arrest you at the dark outskirts of the universe, and restore you to the centre of light and life. Though you have sunk to a depth that would seem exceeded only in the pit that is bottomless, and are sinking still, this love, in the speed and reach of its descent, can outstrip you as you fall, place its strong wing beneath you, and bear you up to the sunshine. Though your trespasses have risen like the loftiest hills, the love of Christ is like the waters of the deluge: it has a height which prevails above the great mountains, and can outmatch the mightiest sins.

Let vain questioning then be silenced. As a sinner, submit at once in faith to the righ-

teousness of God. Listen to the words sounding over the lands,—“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God.” Christ is here now, mighty, willing, waiting to save. Trifle not with present opportunity.

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

II.

ASPECTS OF DIVINE LOVE.

The Divine love is presented in Scripture under various aspects. Let us contemplate it under some of these:—

PITY.—Divine love is exhibited in the Word of God under the aspect of Pity. Pity has respect to a state of need, and has sympathy for the distressed or wretched, even though they may be unconscious of their misery. Job, from among the ashes, cried to his relentless visitors, “Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me.” Elisha’s tears for the miseries coming on his country, and for the sins Hazael would commit, exemplify pity. “As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord

pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." It was with the love of pity that Christ contemplated the young ruler who came in breathless haste and knocked at the strait gate, but who "went away" from it "sorrowful, because he had great possessions." "Jesus," it is said, "beholding him, loved him." Perhaps the most striking illustration of Divine pity is that given on the slope of Olivet, when the Lord beheld Jerusalem and wept over it, saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes."

COMPASSION.—Akin to the aspect of pity, is that of Compassion. Compassion includes pity, and something more. It implies not merely sympathy for the miserable, but a purpose to relieve. So it is said that "Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand, touched the leper, and healed him." Again, on drawing near to the gate of Nain, when the Lord saw the widow, "He had compassion on her, and said to her, Weep not;" then, touching the bier, He awoke the dead, and made the stricken and childless to sing for

joy. To the man out of whom were cast the legion of devils, Jesus said, " Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." " I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Poor traveller who have been set on by robbers, plundered of your goods, broken by the iron rod of the law, are comfortless, stripped of all hope, and stretched on the way-side half-dead, Jesus is the Great Samaritan who, journeying where you lie, sees you, and has compassion on you,—binds up your wounds, pouring in oil and wine. The mightiest example of love under the aspect of compassion is afforded in the words, " God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It is of elective compassion that Paul, when converted, was able to say, " The Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

GRACE.—Grace, strictly, is love in the character of giving to those who have no claim on its benefits. Grace, as the word implies, gives *gratis*, freely, without money

and without price. The sinner is utterly undeserving of all blessing; "there is no difference" among men in this respect, "for all have sinned, and come short of God's glory." "By grace are ye saved." When Paul speaks of his own conversion, he says, "The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." "To the praise of the glory of His grace," the Father makes us "accepted in the Beloved." The history of a Christian is summed up in the words, "By the grace of God I am what I am." And grace it is that reigns "through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." The spontaneous outgoing of love under this aspect is seen in all its magnificence in the words, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."

MERCY.—Love, under the aspect of Mercy, regards its object not merely as without claim on its benefits, but as guilty and deserving of wrath. Mercy looks on the man as condemned by the law. It acknowledges the

justice of God in the sentence of eternal death; while at the same time it interposes for deliverance. On this account it is, that no aspect of the Divine love is, in the first instance, so attractive to the sinner as that of mercy. Mercy meets his case exactly. The sinner first touches with his hand the love of God under the aspect of mercy. "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy." "I," says Paul, "was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy." He is "the Lord, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." God makes "known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy."

Would you know the triumph of mercy, look at the opening of Ephesians ii.: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the chil-

dren of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature children of wrath, even as others."

As I glance at this fearful description, I am reminded of the effects of the ebbing tide at some parts of our coast. As the waters recede, the beach is gradually exposed. With the still retiring sea, the unsightliness of the shore becomes apparent. Stones, sands, rocks, slippery with weeds, mud, slime, and long black tangle in unpicturesque confusion, are successively laid bare. Observe how the apostle uncovers by degrees our guilt and misery: "Dead in trespasses and sins"—"ye walked according to the course of this world"—"according to the prince of the power of the air"—"children of disobedience" in whom that "spirit works"—"all had our conversation in the lusts of our flesh"—"fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind"—finishing his picture with the terrible words, "by nature children of wrath, even as others." But now, mark the change. Man is helpless to deliver, but God speaks. The ebb is

arrested, and the waters begin to flow. "BUT God, who is rich in mercy."—Mercy, sovereign mercy, it is which constitutes the flowing tide. Onwards and still onwards the wavelets make their way, gently but steadily increasing in size, green as the emerald, their crests like snow; ere long the tangle, slime, mud, weedy rocks, sands, and stones are submerged and disappear: the bare and uninteresting expanse is seen no more; and at length, with jubilant voice, the waters rise high on the beach, till, what before was an uncomely wilderness becomes a mirror in which the sun and blue heavens glass themselves.

"Children of wrath, even as others"—such by nature is our fearful condition. "But God,"—listen to the sound of the turning tide—"but God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)"—still the waters rise—"and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus;"—and now, indeed, the flood is at its height—"that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of

His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

Under the multitudinous waves of mercy the unrighteousness of all believers sinks from view: "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." O friends! edge up towards this mercy; if you shrink from touching God's holy love under every other aspect, take courage and lay hold of it in this one. With your eye on the Lamb that died, let your cry to-day be that of the publican—"God be merciful to me a sinner." Our Himalayan sins can find their match in the ocean depths of the mercy of God.

"O Love, thou bottomless abyss!
My sins are swallow'd up in thee;
Cover'd is my unrighteousness,
Nor spot of guilt remains in me;
While Jesus' blood, through earth and skies,
Mercy, free, boundless mercy cries!"

FORBEARANCE AND LONG-SUFFERING.—If mercy has relation to guilt, Forbearance and Long-suffering have reference to continuance in rebellion and persistence in provocation. "Despisest thou the riches of His goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering?" "The

Lord is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," even "the vessels of wrath, He endured with much long-suffering." The greatness of God's long-suffering was shown in the days of Noah, when the judgment was deferred till the latest moment, and the visible Church was reduced to eight in number. The great apostle of the Gentiles gives it as one grand reason why he was saved. "For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting."

READINESS TO FORGIVE.—We distinguish this aspect from that of mercy, in that mercy has special regard to the claims of law and justice, and to the acts of God as a Sovereign. But Readiness to Forgive is love in the heart of God, as of one yearning to pardon injuries that have been committed against him personally. It is love under this aspect which sees the returning prodigal, while yet far off; that has compassion, runs, falls on the neck of the long-lost, and receives him. Observe how this love turned with melting eye to restore backslid-

Peter, when he inflicted on his Master those inexpressible wounds. Love, in the hand of its murderous enemies at Calvary, cried—“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do;” and it blotted out the sin of three thousand of these crucifiers at Pentecost.

CONDESCENDING KINDNESS.—Love in this aspect has regard to those of low estate; it stoops to the case of the mean and insignificant; it cheers the fearing, the dejected, and the solitary; it speaks “a word in season to him that is weary;” it is the stay of the widow, the fatherless, and the stranger; its voice encourages the little child; it “raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes.” Love under this aspect had an ear for Hagar and her fainting boy in the wilderness; it had an eye for the babe Moses among the bulrushes by the Nile. Condescending kindness took up the little children beyond Jordan, folded them in its arms, put its hands on them, and blessed them. “I will betroth thee to me for ever, in righteousness and in loving-kindness.” “Thy loving-kindness is better than life.”

BOUNTIFULNESS.—“The Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him.” “The young lions seek their meat from God.” He opens His hand and feeds the creeping things of the sea. He nourished the nation of Israel in the desert with manna from heaven, day by day, for forty years. The fainting multitudes who followed Him when on earth, He satisfied with bread. He turned the water into wine. With Him are the riches of goodness. The “children of men—thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.” All that His people require will He give them. “My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” “Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.” In nothing does love, under the aspect of bountifulness, more brilliantly shine than in the gift of “that meat which endures to everlasting life.” “If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever:” “and the bread that I will give,” says the Redeemer, “is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

COMPLACENCY.—Once more, love is presented to us under the aspect of Complacency. Complacency is the love wherewith Christ

delights in His saints. With it He beholds those who are attired in His own imputed righteousness, and on whose regenerated nature the lineaments of His own image are portrayed. With this love of complacency He loves the elect angels; with it He loved Lazarus of Bethany, and Martha, and her sister Mary. It is of this love He says, "I love them that love me." "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him." With this love He calls His Church "Hephzi-bah"—My delight is in her; and in the exercise of unchanging complacency will He bless His redeemed for ever and ever.

Such are some of the aspects of the love which passeth knowledge. One love known under many names. The same word in the original language is often used to express different aspects of the same love. It is love which takes its specific title according to the relation it bears to the soul's condition at the time. It is like that majestic river which divides the British possessions from the American States, whose remote original lies beyond the upper extremity of the queen of fresh-water lakes. From this great basin it issues

by a noble outlet, and courses its wondrous way, sometimes as a succession of inland seas, sometimes as the intervening stream or channel connecting them; now as a moving expanse of sea-green waters, which, by and by, is broken with rapids, and then thunders down in swirling folds as the most magnificent cataract on the face of the globe—the only one that never seems to vary in its body of water at any season of the year. Next, stealing away from its boiling cauldron, the river winds quietly along amid steep and wooded banks; emerging thence, it swells anew into a wide sea; then narrows again to form the lovely Lake of the Thousand Isles; thereafter it stretches away till, with a passage unique in the variety of its character, it launches its glad and now broad waters on the bosom of the Atlantic.

One river this, yet does it bear, as every traveller knows, a succession of names, each conferred according to the territory through which, at the time, the river happens to flow.

So it is with the river of the Love of God. Its springs lie deep in the Divine bosom, whence it issues through the outlet of the everlasting covenant, to visit this earth with glorious flow.

One river all the while, it is known among men, under different designations, according to the nature of the province through which it sweeps, whether that be one of wretchedness, guilt, need, or spiritual prosperity. Now, it is denominated the river of Divine Pity; now, of Compassion; a little further on, the river of Grace; then it swells into the beautiful expanse of Divine Mercy; thereafter, traversing a wild and desolate region, it is known as the river of God's Forbearance and Long-suffering; next, we find its magnificent waters precipitating themselves as the cataract of God's Readiness to Forgive; then, it is rolling swiftly onwards amid wooded slopes as the river of Condescending Kindness; ere long, in placid beauty, we perceive it gliding among its thousand isles as the river of Bountifulness; thence, under titles not mentioned here, it passes through other scenes, and finally sweeps onward as the river of Divine Complacency, to lose its shining waters in the depths of eternity to come.

Application.—Such is the River of the water of Life. Say, friends, at which of its windings do we find you standing to-day?

Surely there is no one among us who might not have a place somewhere along its course, at which with "joy to draw water" as "out of the wells of salvation." Do you say that you are still at a loss; that the love of Christ is something too ethereal for you to lay hold of? then, let me remind you that this love is all set forth in the person and work of Christ. The Lord Jesus gave Himself as a sacrifice for sin; He has satisfied, alike in precept and in penalty, that law which we have broken. "This is His name whereby He shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**" Your course is plain: the Lord Jesus makes offer of Himself to sinners of every class. To as many as receive Him, He gives power to become the sons of God. May the Holy Spirit remove the scales from your eyes, and savingly reveal Him to you in all His suitableness. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Let not pride, worldliness, fear, nor unbelief keep you from Him. The invitation to come to Him by faith, is direct; the warrant for the sinner to receive and rest on Him for salvation is unquestionable. The Lord show you your innate depravity and

Peter, when he inflicted on his Master the inexpressible wounds. Love, in the hand of its murderous enemies at Calvary, cried, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do;" and it blotted out the sin of the thousand of these crucifiers at Pentecost.

CONDESCENDING KINDNESS.—Love in aspect has regard to those of low estate, stoops to the case of the mean and insignificant; it cheers the fearing, the dreading, and the solitary; it speaks "a word in season to him that is weary;" it is the stay of the widow, the fatherless, and the strayed; it encourages the little child; it "lifts the poor out of the dust, and lifts the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes." Love under this aspect is for Hagar and her fainting boy in the wilderness; it had an eye for the lade in the bulrushes by the Nile. Kindness took up the little children, folded them in its arms, and blessed them, saying, "I have you for ever in sight." They are

I take to be the more probable meaning of the words. Now, what, according to our passage, is the *immediate* means by which the Christian is to be filled with this blessing? It is this, "To comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."

In proportion to our attainment in the knowledge of Christ's love will be our enjoyment of the blessing promised. Why is it that we cannot point to more Christians among us who are unmistakably filled with all the fulness of God? Why are persons distinguished for eminence in grace and usefulness comparatively so scanty in our congregations? Is it not, in part, because so few are really making adequate attainment in the knowledge of the love of Christ?

Did Christians live in continued contemplation of this love, and grow in the knowledge of it, in the manner described by the apostle, they should be filled with all the fulness of God. Increase in the knowledge of the love, will be attended with a corresponding increase in our possession of the fulness.

Application.—Let us emulate the spiritual endowments of the saints of other days. Enoch, Abraham, Jacob, Job, Moses, David, Paul, and others, are placed before our eyes in the Word of God as illustrations of what grace can effect, and to stimulate us in the pilgrimage to heaven. But are the characters of these saints presented to us like forms of statuary of unapproachable excellency, and such as we are never to expect to see rivalled in any future age? These men were raised up during a long succession of centuries, and they were sinners till the end of life. Why should we think that in these days of the dispensation of the Spirit, under which the Church now lives, characters as noble should not be formed again?

The heavenly Sculptor that fashioned the beautiful specimens of grace that have remained to us from the days of antiquity is present with His people still; He can chisel forms again, as graceful and fair as any of those that of old were monuments of His hand. In the miraculous gift of inspiration possessed by some of the ancient saints, now that the canon of Scripture is complete, we cannot expect to

share. But the grace of heavenly illumination, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and the abundance of the Spirit's fruit, are the rich and common inheritance of the Church of God. Let it be ours to ask and to expect great things. Let us not rest content with anything short of being filled with all the fulness of God. Blessed with that fulness, we shall indeed be holy, pure, and true; we shall be humble, gentle, meek, loving, and patient; our heart will overflow with peace and joy; our life abound in zeal for the Divine glory; we shall be prayerful and generous in our efforts to promote the salvation of our fellow-men; and be unwearied in deeds of philanthropy and charity to all around.

Unconverted sinner, what if you die as you are, without Christ and without hope! Alas! if the light of this wonderful love do not shine savingly on you while you are on earth, can any other future be looked for in your case, but that of the "blackness of darkness for ever?"

N O T I C E

REGARDING

THE LATE MR. KIDSTON.

I CANNOT conclude without alluding to that venerated friend, so long associated with this church and this town, who has passed from us within the last few days. My only regret is, that through the indisposition of a minister,* with whom the departed was connected as an elder for upwards of thirty years, and who was much better qualified than myself for the office, it should have devolved, unexpectedly, on me to make a brief notice of one so beloved by us all.

Some people there are who are honoured to be useful alike in their life and in their death. They resemble the olive of Judea.

* The Rev. Dr. Henderson, Glasgow.

This tree, when alive, is imposing in form, beautiful in foliage, rich in blossom and fruit; its oil is characteristic of the country, and is available for food, light, healing, cleansing, and perfume. The tree is too precious to be felled for ordinary purposes; but when it is cut down, its wood is taken to form panelling and ornament for the halls and cabinets of the great. You may remember that it was of olive that the carved doors of the oracle or holy place in the temple of Solomon were composed. Now, of our late friend we can truly say, that while yet with us, he was as a goodly olive; in stature and aspect comely, in blossom and fruit abundant. Let us hope that, like the olive, he may be useful in death also; that not his surviving family alone, but that friends, fellow-townsman, and especially the members of those congregations among whom he went out and in, may reap benefit from the sad dispensation which has deprived us of his presence. May his death prove life to us.

It is a duty to seek to profit by bereavement. If we could consult those who are gone to be with Christ, we should find that there is no monument which they would more earnestly

desire to be erected to their memory, than one consisting of the spiritual blessing received by surviving children and friends, in connection with their death. Pillars and statues lose their freshness, and their power to affect the eye; the necropolis in which the dust of relatives reposes is comparatively seldom visited, and monumental structures of marble or of granite there, with all their affectionate or laudatory epitaphs, soon cease, in most cases, to be looked at; but the blessed impressions made by the Spirit of God on the heart of survivors while softened through the death of dear friends, are inscriptions which will abide, and which will never lose their value. Grace imparted to the bereaved is a memorial pillar nobler than any that fine taste or high art can erect in honour of the departed.

I am encouraged the more to make allusion to this subject, from the circumstance that Mr. Kidston was himself, I believe, one of those who benefited savingly through acute domestic sorrow.

I intend at present neither to sketch the history nor to attempt to delineate fully the character of our lamented friend. The notices

that have appeared in so many of the journals of the day have made you familiar with the principal features of both.

It is a noble thing, as in the case of Mr. Kidston, for a man to have lived and to have died in possession of the high approbation and moral esteem of those best able to form a correct judgment on his qualities, and whose opinion is of most value in a wide community; and it is no small matter to have passed, as he did, through life, and that a long one, unblemished in outward conduct, and without throwing stumblingblocks in the way of others. Of our departed friend, I may say that reverence for his moral worth deepened as his life was prolonged.

Mr. Kidston was one who adorned the profession of a Christian. He maintained all along, in the midst of a great commercial city, a character distinguished by unsullied probity. He was a man of thorough integrity of purpose and practice, honourable in all his dealings, truthful in speech. From everything discreditable, mean, and unworthy, he stood aloof. He was characterized not less by purity of life than by uprightness in business. Possessed of

wealth acquired by steadiness and by plodding industry, and exercising a generosity which grew with his years, he was great in the very humility and simplicity of his demeanour. Those who sought his counsel or aid—and there were multitudes who did so—never felt abashed by anything like pride or hauteur—the detractions so frequently concomitant on success in the world. Then, how careful was he to show hospitality to strangers and to the ministers of the Gospel who visited this place! How gentle and kind was he at all times! What little child ever felt afraid of him? On the contrary, would not children play about his chair as if he had been like themselves? I may add that, compassionating his fellow-men, he was the bold opponent of intemperance, and used his influence to the utmost to restrain the baneful public-house system.

Of His beneficence I need not remind you, who know better than I do, how great a friend, and how wise a one, he has been to the widowed, the fatherless, and the poor; and this as much by kind counsel as by generous aid. The latter he always gave without ostentation; his charities and substantial donations

found their way as by stealth, into many needy hands and desolate homes.

Some people are like rivers which grow great by the lesser streams in their vicinity contributing to swell their importance. They seem to expect that others should count it a privilege to do them honour. But our friend resembled the river of Egypt, which glides tranquilly on, and, without receiving a tributary, gently overflows its banks, to impart fertility and happiness to the country through which it takes its way.

It is, however, on Mr. Kidston's vital Christianity that we have most satisfaction in dwelling now. What would integrity and beneficence be apart from godliness? They would be spiritually valueless. But there was no dissociation in his case; nay, we may truly say that the actings of our friend were all prompted by Christian principle.

Mr. Kidston feared God in his house; sincerity and seriousness marked all his spiritual exercises. Blessed with a remarkably calm and sound mind, he had an intelligent hold of Divine truth, and formed a just estimate on all religious subjects that came under his

review. In three ways he witnessed for Christ.

1st. By his consistent example, exhibited in the even tenor of his life.

2d. By his public testimony at the Disruption, when, in maintenance of the great principle that Christ must have the sole rule in His own House, he came forth with the brethren on the 18th of May, of the memorable 1843.

3d. By his wise and large-hearted gifts for the extension of the kingdom of Christ at home and abroad. This liberality was in exercise long before the Disruption. What noble Christian enterprise of late years with respect to the West of Scotland, or the Church generally, did he not considerately assist? I cannot here mention particular instances. He gave thousands sterling to aid in the erection of individual churches. His contributions to Missions in India, Africa, Italy, America, and elsewhere, are specimens of his bounty; and, be it remembered, that all the while he was living in a manner the most unassuming—an example in this to the community, as in so many other ways.

It was in the bosom of his own home circle that Mr. Kidston shone to greatest advantage. During his later years particularly, he presented quite a picture of contentment, placidity, and affection. When the last severe attacks of sickness overtook him, the beauty of his Christianity appeared. Like the sun, which, though brightest at mid-day, is most glorious at its setting, he passed from us amid an exhibition of lights and tints of Christian character very lovely to witness on the part of those who waited on him. Indications of deep humility and child-like confidence, faith in Christ's atonement and righteousness, and a general Christfulness of mind, were continually to be noticed. Amid the tossings and wanderings of illness, the bent of his mind, as all his little exclamations show, was towards heaven. "He knows what I am; I've nothing." "In Him is all my trust." "Not in anything I can do; but in Him alone." "My God, my hope He is alone. He careth for me in all my trials and troubles." "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." "I am poor and needy; but the Lord thinketh upon me." "He is all my salvation and all

my desire." This last expression was frequently on his lips. "My presence shall go with thee," alluding to a large printed text sent to him by a friend. On two verses being whispered to him, when he had requested a little water to drink, and which it was not thought proper to give him at the time, he clasped his hands, looked upward, and said, "I asked for pure water, and Thou didst send me Thine own Word instead." When the expression "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," was repeated to him, he murmured to himself, "The righteousness which is of God by faith," as if that were the only righteousness in which we can find acceptance with God. A day and a half before his death he asked what day it was. On being told it was the Sabbath, the day Christ rose, and conquered death and the grave, he made some inquiry about Christ's being in the grave; and when answered, said, "Ah, the grave; yes, He was there too!" On the day on which he died, he was asked, "Are you able to put your trust in Jesus now?" he replied, "Quite; I have perfect trust and rest

in Jesus; He upholds me now, and will carry me all the way." The same night, at half-past one A.M., February 21, 1865, he gently fell asleep.

Let us seek to be ready for the summons which ere long will call us away. Without the raiment of Christ's righteousness *on* us, without the new heart, the gift of the Spirit, *in* us, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.







